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Washington, DC - Congressman Mark Kirk (R-IL) joined Chairman Frank Wolf (R-VA) on a letter sent to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) calling on the Commission to issue a national consumer alert, urging parents to review the web pages of their children on MySpace.com, Facebook.com and other "social networking" sites. Wolf chairs the Science, State and Justice House Appropriations Subcommittee that funds the FTC. Kirk is the third ranking member on the subcommittee.

"One in five children receives unwanted sexual advances online," said Kirk. "Social networking sites like MySpace.com contain web pages for tens of millions of American children. Using the anonymity of the Internet, pedophiles have found a virtual hunting ground to prey on children. The FTC needs to issue a national consumer alert, urging parents to monitor who is contacting their children via these sites. The so-called "friend" e-mailing their child may actually be a predator."

Kirk and Wolf's letter comes as the use of social networking sites like MySpace.com is rising among children. More than 70 million people are registered on MySpace.com, many of them teenagers or younger. Although these sites can provide a means for people to network, they are also becoming a "virtual hunting ground" for pedophiles to prey on young children. Reports of sexual assaults and kidnappings linked to the Internet are growing and Internet child pornography cases rose by more than 2,000 percent over the last 10 years.

"MySpace.com removed 200,000 "objectionable" profiles recently, but there are several million sites composed by children," said Kirk. "So far we are only dealing with the tip of the iceberg. It is a common sense step for the FTC to warn parents of the growing online danger to children."

While he waits for a response from the FTC, Congressman Kirk is taking further steps to urge parents about the dangers to children posed by predators using social networking sites. Working with his Student Leadership Advisory Board (composed of high school junior and senior class presidents), they are shooting Public Service Announcements (PSAs) aimed at warning parents about MySpace.com and other social networking sites. The PSAs are scheduled to run on local cable channels across Kirk's congressional district in early May.

"One of our young class presidents was approached by a predator using Myspace.com," Kirk said. "Our high school class presidents chose this topic and wrote the scripts. I am proud they are leading by alerting parents to the dangers that their classmates face online."

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